

Sri AZEEZ SAIT.—According to Rule 184, the Speaker should get the latest information and not the Minister; every act and deed should be informed to you. Why was not the Speaker informed about this? That itself is a breach of privilege.

Mr. SPEAKER.—I am delivering the Ruling on the point raised by Sri K. H. Patil later on, either in the course of the day or at a later date

Calling attention to a Matter of Public Importance Under Rule 63

Sri T. R. SHAMANNA (Fort-Bangalore).—Sir, I call the attention of the Minister for Food and Civil Supplies regarding the unsatisfactory condition of supply position of food grains in ration depots and varying policies of Government leading to variation in the prices of food articles.

Sri B. D. JATTI (Minister for Food and Civil Supplies).—Sir, The Hon'ble Member has called attention to certain difficulties faced by the card holders in the Bangalore Informal Rationing Area, as a result of inadequate supplies of food grains to the Fair Price Shops. He has also stated that the quality of rice supplies is inferior, and that Tur Dhall and other Dhalls are sold at very high rates, and that the partial de-control of sugar is causing great hardship to consumers. He concludes that in recent months, on account of policy of Government the the prices of foodgrains has risen considerably high and the poor consumers are put to great hardship.

In response, I wish to make the following statement,—

2. The State is marginally deficit in foodgrains, and particularly in rice. The stocks of foodgrains held by Government were also somewhat lower owing to the difficulties in achieving the full targets of procurement during the previous season. The Government of India's allotment of foodgrains during the last few months has also been very low, and as far as rice is concerned, there have been no allotments at all in August, September, October, November.

3. It was against this background that during November 1967, and in the first two weeks of December 1967 the issues of rice had to be scaled down to 50 per cent of the normal quota. A similar reduction had to be effected in respect of wheat but the full quota has been restored in December, 1967. We have been able to secure an allotment of 3,000 tonnes of rice from the Madhya Pradesh and 1,000 tonnes from Andhra Pradesh just recently, and we are making all efforts to move these supplies quickly. We are therefore hopeful that the supply position of rice will improve, and that it would also be possible to maintain full issues of wheat. I may mention that these difficulties

during the lean months of September to December are common to all parts of the country, and that we have made our best efforts to tide over the situation without causing much hardship to the consumer.

4. With regard to distribution arrangements, the Department has intensified its inspections and verification, and has also informed the card-holders from week to week about the quotas of foodgrains to be issued. Instructions exist that where deteriorated stocks are found, these should be replaced by stocks of good quality of foodgrains. We realise that inspite of these measures, there are antisocial elements who take advantage and indulge in malpractices. We have suspended or cancelled 70 Retail Agencies in the past few months, and with the co-operation of the public we hope to maintain and intensify our vigilance.

5. The supply position of Sugar has undoubtedly been affected by the recent decision of partial de-control by the Government of India. Domestic consumers are, however, being supplied with the same quantities as before and with regard to bulk consumers, Government are taking steps to see that a reasonable part of the production of sugar which the factories are allowed to sell in the free market is made available to the bulk consumers within the State.

6. The deficiency in pulses is a characteristic of the Southern States, but in normal times there used to be a heavy inflow of Gram/Gramdhal from other States—Northern States. During the last two years, exports of pulses on private account have been inadequate from the northern States, and moreover the Government of India's allotment has been at a low figure of 3,700 tonnes this year as against 9,000 tonnes during the same period last year. However the State Government have made special efforts and have been able to secure 3,200 tonnes Gram/Gramdhal from Haryana on a State to State basis.

7. The Hon'ble Member states that the policies of Government have resulted in considerable rise in prices. I would like to say that if the open market prices for 1966 and for 1967 are compared, generally speaking they have ruled Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 per quintal lower during the current year. Moreover Government have maintained uniform and fixed prices throughout the year 1967 in respect of issues made from the Fair Price Shops. Recently we have also been encouraging a few similar oriented institutions like the Janata Bazar, the Merchant's Janatha Stores, the Retail Foodgrain Dealers Association etc., to secure food grains from the surplus areas or markets sell them in Bangalore with minimum profit margins.

8. I have no doubt that with the generally favourable seasonal conditions and intensive efforts made by the Agencies concerned to secure the foodgrains due from growers under the Levy Orders, and the Government of India's assistance in the matter of allotment of foodgrains, we shall be able to take care of the essential needs of the consumers in the State in the coming months.